

Beginning Learning in Depth with 4-7 year olds.

With the aid of two very experienced Kindergarten teachers, I introduced LiD to their perspective classes. The teachers and I had already discussed the principles and process of LiD and they had read the LiD materials available. They also had an opportunity to ask questions and devise a timetable that worked for each of their classes needs. We agreed to use a narrative to introduce LiD to the students within a four-week period; however; this could have been done in a shorter length of time. We listed and then created the materials needed. Finally, letters to parents were drafted and our adventure into LiD for young learners begun.

One method of introducing Learning in Depth to four, five and six year olds is through a narrative, preferably one that is about a character on a quest, like Stuart Little, Curious George, or any of the Grimm's fairytale stories. In one of the examples provided below, I utilized parts of the story, The Little Prince by Antoine de Saint-Exupéry.

A narrative format will engage the children and construct a context for the 20-30 topics you want to introduce to your students. However close you want to keep to the original story line is up to you, just take every opportunity to introduce and talk briefly about the topics and have fun with story.

A few very brief examples:

Stuarts' Adventure

Stuart Little (RODENTS) drives his car (TRANSPORTATION) through (JUNGLES), (SWAMPS & WETLANDS), (FORESTS) and (TUNDRA), asking (BUTTERFLIES & MOTHS), (BEARS), (DOGS), (BIRDS), (HORSES), (FARM ANIMALS), (INSECTS) and (CATS) for their help to find the last known (DINOSAURS). Stuart learns he must go back in time (MEASUREMENT OF TIME), and (TRAVEL) in a plane (PLANES & AIRPORTS), then on a train (TRAINS & RAILWAYS), climb (MOUNTAINS), adventure

through (TUNNELS), over (BRIDGES) to the (ANCIENT RUINS) buried under tons of (ROCKS & STONES), (LEAVES), (FUNGI) and (DUST) to find his (DINOSAURS). When Stuart arrives he sits down to rest. While resting, Stuart hears (MUSIC); someone singing (SONGS). When he investigates Stuart finds a princess (MYTHS & FOLKLORE) dancing (DANCE) with a pirate (PIRATES) holding a treasure map (MAPS) in front of a cave (CAVES, MINES & TUNNELS). As Stuart enters the cave he meets a spider (SPIDERS), who gives him a candle (LIGHT) made from bees wax (BEES). Deep in the cave (CAVES, MINES & TUNNELS). Stuart finds an underground lake (PONDS & LAKES) with a boat (SHIPS & BOATS) floating on it. In the boat is a large egg (EGGS). Stuart has found his dinosaur egg (EGGS) and thus completing his quest, he returns home with his prize.

The Little Prince's Adventure

This story is about a Little Prince who lives on a very small planet. It is so small there is no room for a (FOREST), or a pond (PONDS & LAKES) or houses (BUILDINGS) or even a tree (TREES)! There is room for his only friend, a very needy flower (FLOWERING PLANTS). The Little Prince leaves his planet to see (EXPLORATION) other worlds, in the (SOLAR SYSTEM). He (TRAVELS) to a planet ruled by a mad king (FLAGS & HERALDRY). Imagine what it would be like to move from planet to planet (SOLAR SYSTEM) by just thinking it. He needs no (SPACECRAFT) or (AIR or ATMOSPHERE) or (TOOLS & SIMPLE MACHINES). The Little Prince needs no special space suit (CLOTHING) or food (COOKING), or (MONEY) to spend: he just needs himself.

The Little Prince comes to (EARTH), to a (DESERT), not the (ANTARCTICA), not the (SEA SHORE), but the (DESERT). Here, he meets a man stranded, trying to fix his plane (AIRCRAFT & AIRPORTS). The (DESERT) is a hostile place with no (WATER), just sand and (DUST) storms. The man tells the Little Prince about himself and about the (EARTH), like (WEATHER & CLIMATE), (ENGINES), (WHALES), (SHEEP) and (APPLES). The Little Prince talks about his friend, flower (FLOWERING PLANTS), (VOLCANOES), (COLOR) and friendship. The two walk through the (DESERT), and

find a road (ROADS), which they follow until they are picked up by a truck (TRANSPORTATION) and driven to the nearest city (BUILDINGS). The man wants the Little Prince to come stay with him and his family, as they have become friends. The Little Prince has learned that he has a friend and responsibilities too. The Little Prince has learned.... (Students fill this part in).

The below story was written for a grade 1-2 class.

Once upon a time there were 2 friends, George (a frog) and Sammy (a salamander). They lived in an **amphibian** community, near a **forest** full of **trees** and **water**, at the bottom of a very old **volcano**. George and Sammy lived next door to each other under a very old **bridge**. Everyday George and Sammy went **exploring** to see and discover new things.

Some days George and Sammy **explored** the **water's** edge for **rocks and stones** , collecting interesting rock shapes and colours and if they were lucky, they found pieces of **metal** objects that had floated by in the **water**, where they would sail paper **ships** and try to catch **insects** and **worms** to eat. On other days, George and Sammy went past the **water**, through the **forest** all the way to the **farm** that grew the wonderful **apples**. If George and Sammy were lucky, they would find an **apple** on the ground. Mmmm sweet and juicy. BUT.. they had to be vigilant! George and Sammy took turns watching for the greedy **goat** and other **farm animals** that lived there, whom also liked to eat **apples**. BUT most of all Sammy and George kept a sharp eye out for the **farmer** who listened to loud noises coming from his house. Mommy called it **music**, which was made by people singing or something called **musical instruments**. Mommy said she had heard this **music** when a group of people came to the **forest**. She said it was called **the circus**.

One day the farmer came with some **boxes on wheels and tall sticks** and picked all the **apples** and put them in a huge **building** that had wonderful smells and smoke coming out of its top.

Sammy and George scurried back to the **bridge** to ask mommy what had happened to all the **apples**.

George's mommy said the farmer **cooks** the **apples** to make applesauce to sell to people to make **money**. As mommy told the little **amphibians** all about **farming**, the **farm animals, apples, cooking** applesauce and **money**, the **weather** outside changed and it started to rain.

"Oh Good" said mommy, "now the **fungi** will grow and we can have a wonderful dinner."

"But mommy", said George, "Where can we go **explore** now if there are no more **apples** at the **farm**?"

"Oh there are so many interesting places to **explore**, like the **ancient ruins** in the **forest**."

"What **ancient ruin**?" asked Sammy.

"There is an **ancient ruin** built by men a very long time ago. You can't see it easily because it is buried under lots of **leaves** from all the **trees** in the **forest**", said mommy. "Oh look, the **weather** is changing and I can go pick some **fungi**. And, I suggest you leave the **old ruins** for another day because it is getting dark. See the **moon** starting to shine?"

"Why is there a **moon**," asked George?

"The **moon** is just of the **solar system**... and George, that's enough questions for now. **Let's get moving** to find those **fungi**."

So George and mommy hopped while Sammy ran out to the **trees** in search of yummy **fungi**. They didn't need a **map** to find them because any smart **amphibian** knows; **fungi** grow at the base of **trees** where it is dark and wet.

The Process

In each of the K LiD classes the black and white picture cards were used to introduce the 'topics' to the students as the narrative unfolded. One at a time each card was placed in a pocket chart and was referred back to when it was mentioned throughout the story. Sometimes the topic context was clear and straightforward, while other times the topics needed some discussion. In one of the K classes, the

cards were handed to students to hold and were held up proudly by the student when the topic was referred to. The cards can be left in the chart in the class until the next LiD time.

How long the story needs to be depends on the number of topics you want to introduce. The story continues over two classes to provide students the opportunity to talk about the story and the topics.

In the second LiD class the story was reviewed along with the topics. Once the story was completed, with topics, the ending came about through a collaborative effort by the class. The students were told that one topic would be theirs next LiD class.

In the third LiD class the charts stands started empty. Bring out the cards one at a time., place the first card in the pocket chart. With each successive card, ask the students where the card needs to go in the pocket chart. When a student tells you where to put the card, you can ask them why they chose that place... What is their thinking? The students end up sort the topic cards into categories. It doesn't take long before the students have categorized all the cards. The discussion during this process is very informative and a great way to discover how the students view the world.

The teacher can either choose the topic for each of the students or place the topic cards from the chart into a bag for the students to draw out their own topic, making sure there are no duplications. A small ceremony was created as each student received their topic and a personal blank portfolio. After the applause the students wrote their names and topics on their portfolio.



Time Frame: approximately 4 weeks (This could be done in 2 weeks if there is time available.) Session 1 is with teachers prior to beginning LiD, while session 2-4 are in class for approximately 30-45 minutes per class.

Materials:

- 4x8" cards with black and white drawings of LiD topics (choose approximately 30 topics). Choose topics depending on the support material availability within the school.
- large chart paper (An overall class list on a chart with the student's topics can be displayed in the class for all to see.)
- 2 pocket charts
- list of LiD topics on hand
- a letter to parents introducing LiD and LiD Brief Guides for Parents
- portfolios (folded large sheets of Bristol board)

Purpose of 3 in class sessions:

1. Introduce the concept of 'topics' (themes, subjects, areas) through a narrative.
2. Complete the story and categorize topics
3. To assign topics and Celebrate the receiving their personal portfolio.